was extremely low. The Social Democrats regarded them with great interest, as a potentially socialist element in the population, and agitated constantly for the building of separate houses for them, and for better working conditions, etc.[1] In those Provinces where hired labour formed a considerable element in the working population, the Social Democrats made good headway, but it cannot be said that their agricultural programme on the whole met with any considerable measure of success.

On the other hand, although the peasants showed a lack of interest in the abuses of women's labour, the problem of alcohol, the fate of the hired labourer, and other questions which exercised the Social Democrats, they were by far the most staunch supporters of democratic government.[2]

The hostility of men like Dr. Ender to the Viennese socialists after the war was not so much based on dislike of their democratic proclivities as on opposition to their policy of centralization. The *Bauernbund*, led by Dr. Reither, frequently protested against the reactionary politics of the Christian Socialist party leaders. And although it is true that a considerable number joined the *Heimwehr*, and later a very much larger number the Nazis, it is probable that the rank and file of the Austrian peasantry remained to the end supporters of the democratic principle.

Again, although it is true that the peasantry were, on the whole, Catholic in outlook, while the workers had drifted away from the Church, and were for the most part indifferent, if not hostile, in their attitude towards it, this divergence must not be overestimated. The lower clergy, who worked among the peasants, were very much more democratic in their views than their ecclesiastical superiors. The overwhelming majority were themselves of peasant stock and tended, therefore, to share the outlook of their flocks.[3] There were indications in 1932, for instance, that many of them strongly disapproved of the attitude adopted by their superiors towards the *Heimwehr*.

[1] See Bauer's speech on the Agrarian Programme of the Social Democrats at the 1925 Party Conference.

[2] Tyrol and Vorarlberg, in particular, looked back proudly on a centuries-old tradition of self-government.

[3] The higher clergy were also, for the most part, men of humble origin. e.g. Monsignor Seipel, Cardinal Innitzer.

2: MacDonald S-4 (no date) 1946 EK1 Austria EK1

In any case, the extent of clerical influence among the peasantry can easily be overestimated. The Austrians were not prone to take their religious life too seriously; and attempts made by the Church to extend its influence outside purely religious matters were not regarded with approval.[1] Anti-clericalism had its roots far back in the past, and had antedated by many decades the challenge of the socialists and the emergence of the Nazi party.

But if the clericalism of the conservative peasantry can easily be overestimated, so can the anti-clericalism of the Social Democrats. It is true that the party were prepared to fight what may be termed 'political Catholicism' because this was considered to be a force dangerous to the party.[2] But the Free Thinkers, who were actively hostile to the Church, were very small in number, and were strongly discouraged in their activities by Bauer, Renner, and most of the other leaders.[3] And, while it is true that the rank and file of the party were passively hostile to the Church, or at least, indifferent to its claims, certain leaders, as Ellenbogen and Leuthner, stated unequivocally that they considered this a source of weakness rather than of strength, to the party, and were anxious to see a revival of religion in the ranks of the Social Democrats.[4]

[1] On 20 October 1931, for instance, the *Neue Freie Presse* drew attention to the big peasant meeting, 4,000 strong, which had taken place at S. Johann im Pongau, and remarked that the peasants had demonstrated 'nicht nur gegen die Regierung u. die Parteipolitik, sondern auch gegen die politisierenden Geistlichen'.

[2] See the report prepared by the party executive for the Party Conference at Linz in 1926: 'Die römische Kirche übt ihre grosse Macht über die Seelen der breiten Massen, die ihrer Klassenlage nach, zu der Arbeiterklasse gehören, dazu aus, um sie von der Teilnahme an dem Befreiungskampf der Arbeiterklasse fernzuhalten, u. diese Massen in der Gefolgschaft bürgerlicher Parteien zu erhalten. . . . Dadurch stützt die römische Kirche die Herrschaft der Bourgeoisie.'

[3] Speech by Renner at the 1925 Social Democratic Party Conference, when the whole question was discussed: 'Ich möchte aber das eine betonen: es ist auch in dem Staat nicht Sache der Sozialdemokratie Partei, Religion u. Kirche zu bekämpfen.'

[4] Speech by Leuthner at the 1926 Party Conference: 'Im tiefsten Grund entstehen Religionen aus dem eingebornen, ewigen, unsterblichen u. durch nichts zu unterdrückenden Drang des gesamten Menschheitsgeschlechtes nach Erklärung der letzten Ursachen der Dinge.' He registered a strong protest against the attempt of the Free Thinkers to make acceptance of their creed the *sine qua non* of socialism. Cf. with speech of Preis: 'Seine Apostel'

665 668 779 Otto Bauer,[1] a simple workman, organized a group within the party known as the 'Religious Socialists'. He succeeded in establishing some contacts with the more sympathetic of the clergy.[2] The hostility of the Church, however, prevented the movement from achieving any considerable success.[3]

The policy of the Church itself was not, however, at any rate for the first seven years of the Republic, as reactionary as is sometimes supposed. After the breakdown the Bishops professed unequivocally their loyalty to the Republican régime[4] and there seems no reason to question the sincerity of this declaration. In 1925 they issued a Pastoral Letter which showed marked sympathy with the claims of the working classes,[5] although they were not prepared to tolerate any compromise with the Social Democrats.[6]

After 1927, however, conditions changed for the worse in this, as in so many other respects. The episcopate had been aroused by the anti-clerical programme which had been decided on by the Social Democratic Party Conference at Linz in 1926 (in spite of protest from the moderate element

---

(Free Thinkers) 'haben an Intoleranz ungefähr dasselbe geleistet wie die Vertreter aller übrigen Religionen zusammen.' And Mentasti pointed out that opposition to alcohol and opposition to the churches meant opposition to the only forms of relaxation open to the peasants.

[1] Not to be confused with his famous namesake, one of the greatest of the Social Democrats.

[2] e.g. with Prof. Fliegler.

[3] It was condemned by the Bishops in 1930 (see Kungebung, *Des österreichischen Episkopates zur sozialen Frage*, January 1930.)

[4] See pronouncement made by Cardinal Piffl, 4 November 1918: 'Treue gegenüber der Republik.' Pastoral Letter of the Bishops and Archbishops, 23 January 1919, in defence of democracy. (Knoll, A. M., Von Seipel zu Dollfuss, 1934, pp. 44–7.)

[5] See Knoll, op. cit., pp. 48–59. 'Über Politik, Volkswirtschaft u. Moral. Demokratie u. Neue Staatsform.' The letter inveighed against the evils of capitalism in the strongest terms, because of the lack of regard shown by its leaders for the natural rights of the workers, and their attempt to dominate public life. 'Bei Gott ist kein Unterschied zwischen der Seele der Fabrikarbeiters u. der Seele des Fabrikherrn.' In April 1926, further instructions were issued to priests, urging them to inveigh against the usurious exploitation of the workers.

[6] In April 1926, Roman Catholics were forbidden, except under special circumstances, to join Social Democratic Trade Unions, or to vote for Social Democrats. (Knoll, op. cit., p. 135, 'Instructio pro clero in re soziali'.)

2: MacDonald S-4 (no date) 1946 EK1 Austria EK1

in the party). And the fighting in Vienna in 1927, which, partly owing to the drastic measures taken to repress the rioters by Seipel's Government, resulted in thousands of people leaving the Church, and deflected episcopal policy decidedly to the right. Seipel, for his part, turned to the anti-working-class big industrialists for support against what he conceived to be the danger *par excellence*. The hostile attitude of the Church towards the Schober Block at the November elections of 1930 occasioned much scandal.[1]

It would, however, probably be a mistake to regard the Church as the villain of the piece even after 1927. It continued to evince great interest in social problems.[2] And although the higher clergy, and perhaps the majority of the lower clergy, regarded the *Heimwehr* movement with favour, as being a useful weapon for curbing socialist influence, they could not be very enthusiastic about a movement so deeply tinged with Nazi anti-clericalism.[3]

Although it is true that in the two main groups, the Social Democrats and the Christian Socialists, the balance of power tended to pass to the extreme wings, other important groups existed who were much more moderate in their outlook, and who stood unequivocally for democratic government. The *Landbund*, for instance, an organization supported chiefly by the more wealthy peasants led by Herr Winkler, inveighed constantly against the fascist proclivities of the Christian Socialists and the *Heimwehr*. Even in 1929, when it supported a reorganization of the state on a corporative basis, hoping thereby to secure a better representation of agricultural interests, its members emphasized the fact that the movement

[1] *Stellungnahme zu den österreichischen Nationalratswahlen*, 9 November 1930, 26 October 1930. (See Knoll, op. cit., pp. 167–77.)

[2] Lent Pastoral Letter, 1928, inveighing against low wages of women and bad housing. *Fasten Hirtenbrief der Erzbischöfe u. Bischöfe Österreichs*, 1928. (Knoll, op. cit., pp. 150–3.)

[3] In January 1930 a declaration was issued declaring that the Church could not consecrate the flags of political parties—'Politischen Vereinen ist mit Rücksicht auf die überparteiliche Stellung der Kirche die Weihe der Fahnen nicht zu bewilligen'.

See also the Lent Pastoral Letter, February 1932, issued by all the Bishops, warning the people against the Nazis.